

1921 - 1932



HAVANA - After Dark

Emil

WWWG Productions Ltd.

Singapore

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Welcome to yet another insight into the warped life and times of Emil and an interesting collection from a time before Havana was to become a hopping, casino city of tough times, desperate people and to before it become a true American Vacation Lands ran for the sole benefit of the United Fruit Company, the mobsters who invested vast sums from the Teamster's Retirement Fund to expand the hotels and casinos and to give the well-healed Americanos a place to be wicked in (and they truly were).

Emil , Claudie and I washed up on the beachfront after we lost interest in the Killing Fields of the Northern Trenches (France and World War 1) and declared our own peace while on an self-extended leave in Paris from the front in 1917.

We left Paris in a rather big huff after our extended leave from the war started to draw the attention of the local neighborhood Spidermen (noisy neighbor ladies in our tenement of Paris's Grotto District), then as the local authorities started to snoop around, we embarked upon our grail search to find a better life. We ended up in Havana on shore leave from the tramp steamer we had called home for over a year traveling the Caribbean...We sat up shop at the first beach front Bistro, where Emil made a descent living doing cute fotos of the locals.

Seine Lagone



Greeting my fellow campers and fellow travelers...it has been a while since we last had an opportunity to chat and share a park bench, it has been a rather trying time of defiance, where WWWG passed on my story about being detained in Hong Kong as they agreed with the Chinese that I needed an attitude adjustment and in fact, they offered to fly me back there for another refresher...

In fact, I now believe that Mr. Chucky and his band of thug accountants that work for WWWG and who, I might note are of Chinese ancestry and who may have cousins in Hong Kong...they may have played a role in my 6 weeks of detention...

After a detention to adjust my attitude...dusted the cobwebs off my trusty, Nikon F4s and the computer still boots...good to go...off into the new year with no more wicked thoughts about Chinese Tourists in Asia...at least, not while in Hong Kong doing a book...those little buggers at the thought agency control center have a thin skin, can't take a joke... and can track anyone down within an hour...no trial.



TABACOS

Emil





I just disappeared...

Soon to be a new book...

NOT!

According to WWWG!

I am not sure if I am allowed to ever go back...what they gave me was in Chinese...but, I think it is a restraining order of some sorts...

What a long, strange trip it has been!

Happy New Year to each and all the geeks still there in holding cell #37...

Opps!!!

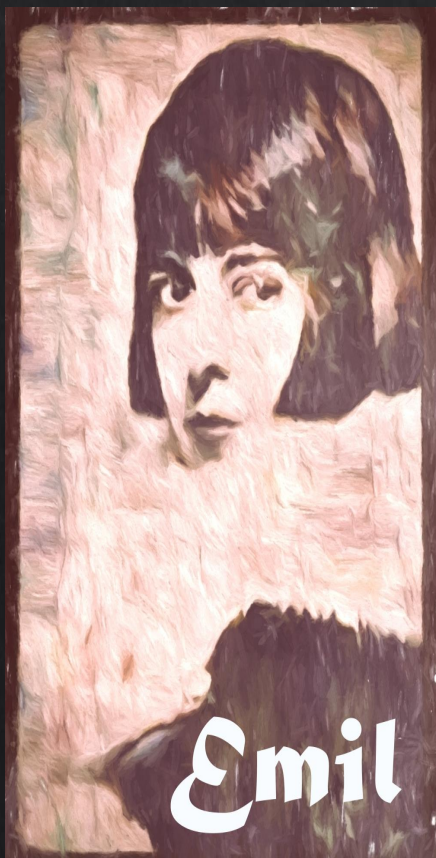
I wasn't suppose to mention that...

Was I?

Well, Campers!

Back to the story, just in case Seine and the boys are actually reading any of this...

Oh! Yes, it was about 1920, we had just washed up on our first shore leave from the tramp steamer that we had called home, it had taken us on a trip of several lifetimes as we tramped about, all through out the Caribbean...island hopping, a little good-hearted smuggling, more than a few tight spots of being half-a-step ahead of the local tax collectors...





Emil



but, it was hard work and the money (when there was any) sucked...

So, once ashore, we sniffed the air, saw the opportunities for a few enterprising young capitalists and we never shed a tear nor did we look back even as the Carrie-Ann sailed out of Havana Harbor, without us...

We sat up shop in a local seaside bistro...more a local dive bar that didn't object to having a couple of Americanos hustling about as long as they had a piece of the action and we didn't cheat the locals.

I started doodling and playing with a camera I found in a pawn shop before we left Paris.

Leaving Paris!

This is still hard, even after all these years, it never leaves me...it is always just there, right off page one of my daily thoughts.

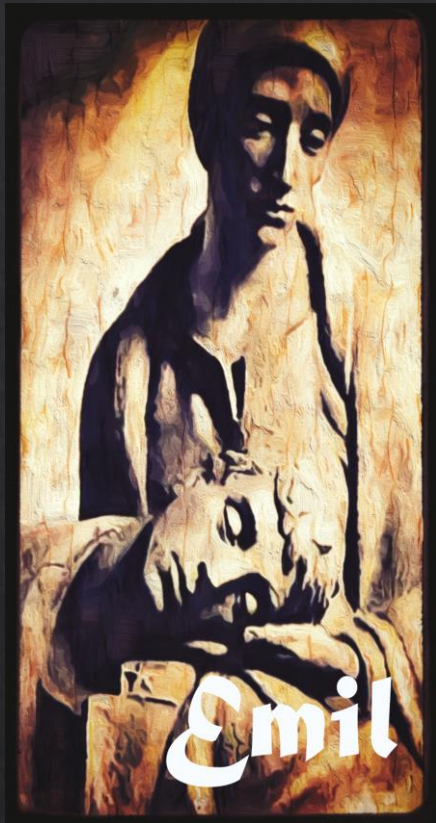
It wasn't that we were cowards...

We just saw no more sense in the raw slaughter, in the sheer level of destruction and wholesale butchery that was being waged in the first, truly industrial war that the world and that we had personally seen much too closely ever since we were





Emil



pressed into military service for God,
country and king...in 1915...

We were told that it was either
service or jail...

Nothing serious,

No we didn't rob a bank,

No, we didn't kill anyone...

We simply got in an argument with
the establishment of a local pub over
an outrageous bar tab...or some sort
of thing as I remember...

As I said, it was a simple
misunderstand...

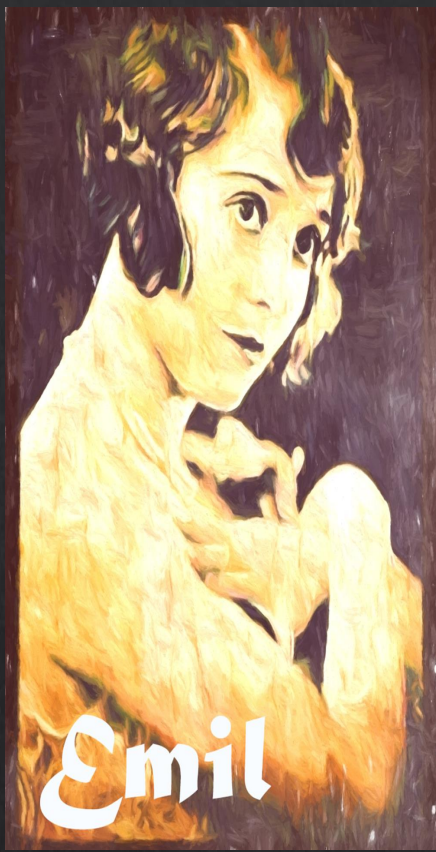
No big thing except the pub owner's
cousin was a commander in the local,
home guard...to our great luck!

In fact, it was a recruitment scam as
we would later learn to fill the ranks
so that the cultured, gentry class
would not need to muddy their dress
boots in the muddy fields of
Flanders.

After 2 years, we decided that we
didn't have a grudge against the
Germans and decided to do our own
part to put an end to the senseless
butchery, so we decided to self-extend
our leave and just never went back –







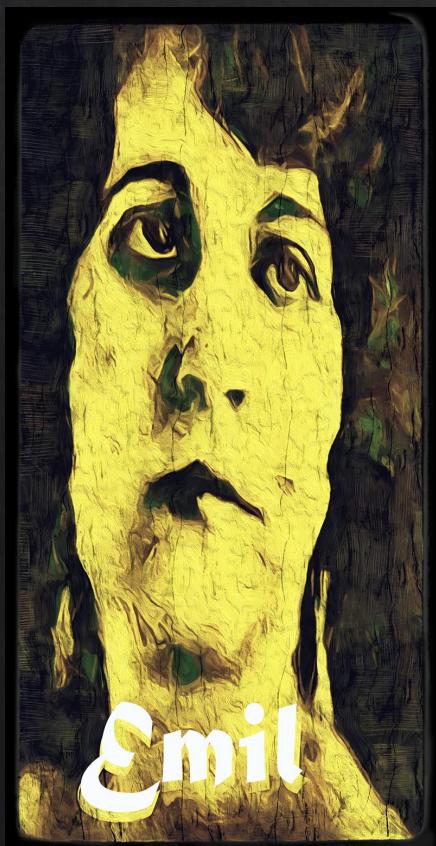
much as the average French Soldiers were...the much forgotten story was that 10,000 French Soldiers just starting going home every week in 1917...

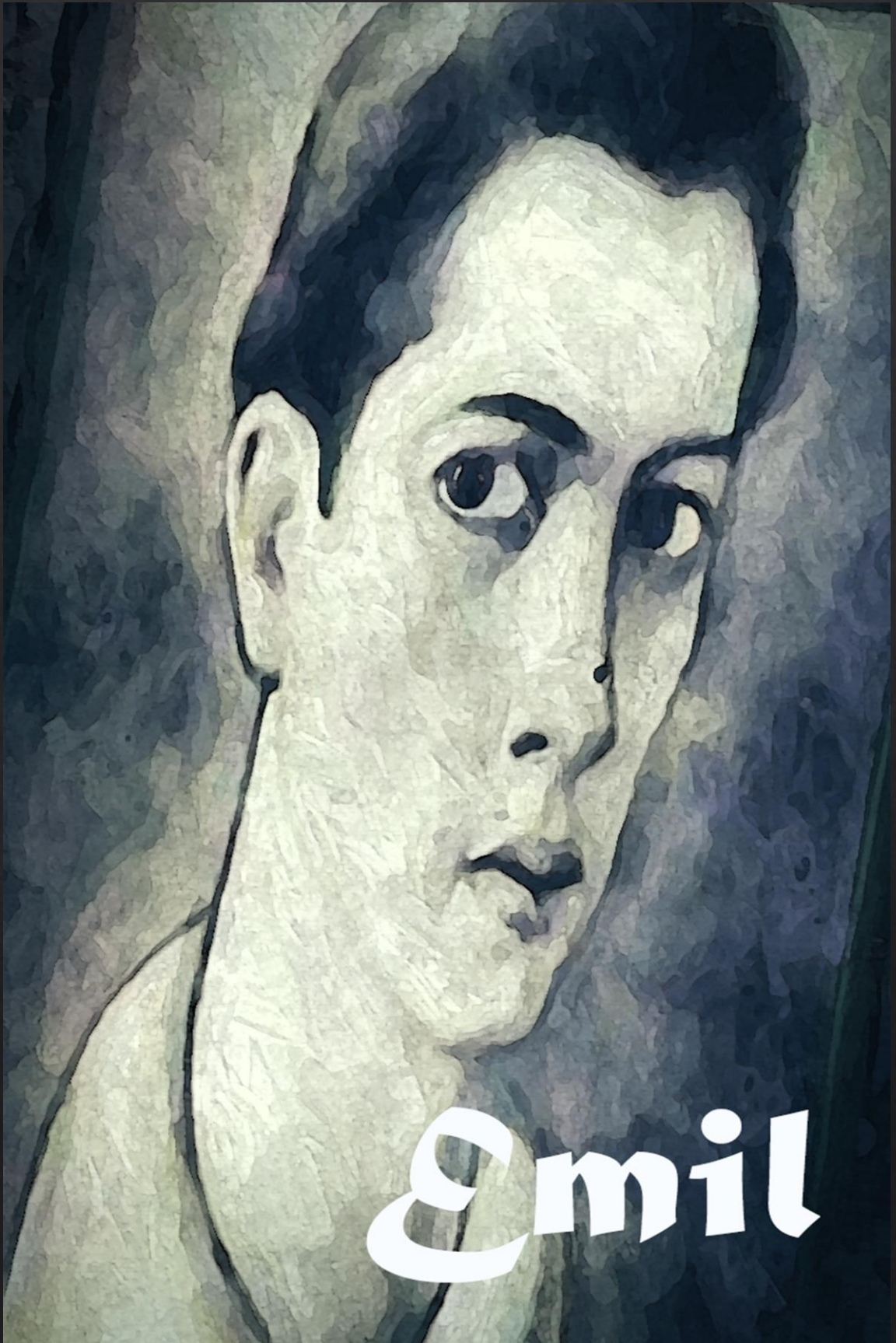
Had the war lasted another year, there would have been no French Army left to accept the German surrender.

We stayed in Paris, right in the middle of a rundown part of the Grotto and it was there that we met Claudie and that lead to his cousin, Minnie, then, to first love and all that foolishness that comes when you are 22 while being free-and-about, here in Paris...the true city of love...

Leaving all this was hard but, staying would have been harder...seems that we had several neighbor ladies, who were more than really snoop, they became overly concerned in everyone's business...

They turned their attention to us and they thought that we were too healthy to be on our "sick leave" excuse for being so long in Paris...







We left with military MPs, locals with pitchforks and even one or two Paris policemen, we were only half-a-step ahead of them as we reached the docks seeking a midnight passage...wherever...it didn't matter...
“we have cash!”

Flash forward to 1920 and we return to the start of this story and us setting up shop here in Havana...that is in Cuba...

In the early years, people started asking for me to do a picture of them and soon I had more business than I ever wanted (I was cheap and people liked what I was doing).

Here is a collection of those years...
Hope you enjoy!





Flapper gals over-ran Carlos' every winter in the late Twenties...seeking rum or stronger...wild and crazy in a way they could never be at home...They were good for business and paid in hard currency or had least, the dandies that hung on their arms did...Carlos was pleased to see them come...



Emil



She was from somewhere in Oho, I believe...I remember her telling me once in passing and she never talks about how she ended up working nights at Carlos' gin joint...does it really matter?



Emil



Madame Jennie was another working gal at Carlos' and she always had that touch of mystery and was very popular with the regular rum runners...she ended up married one (a regular dandy who you knew had a different gal in every port) in a rush to beat the stork and I remember the first and last wedding at Carlos'.

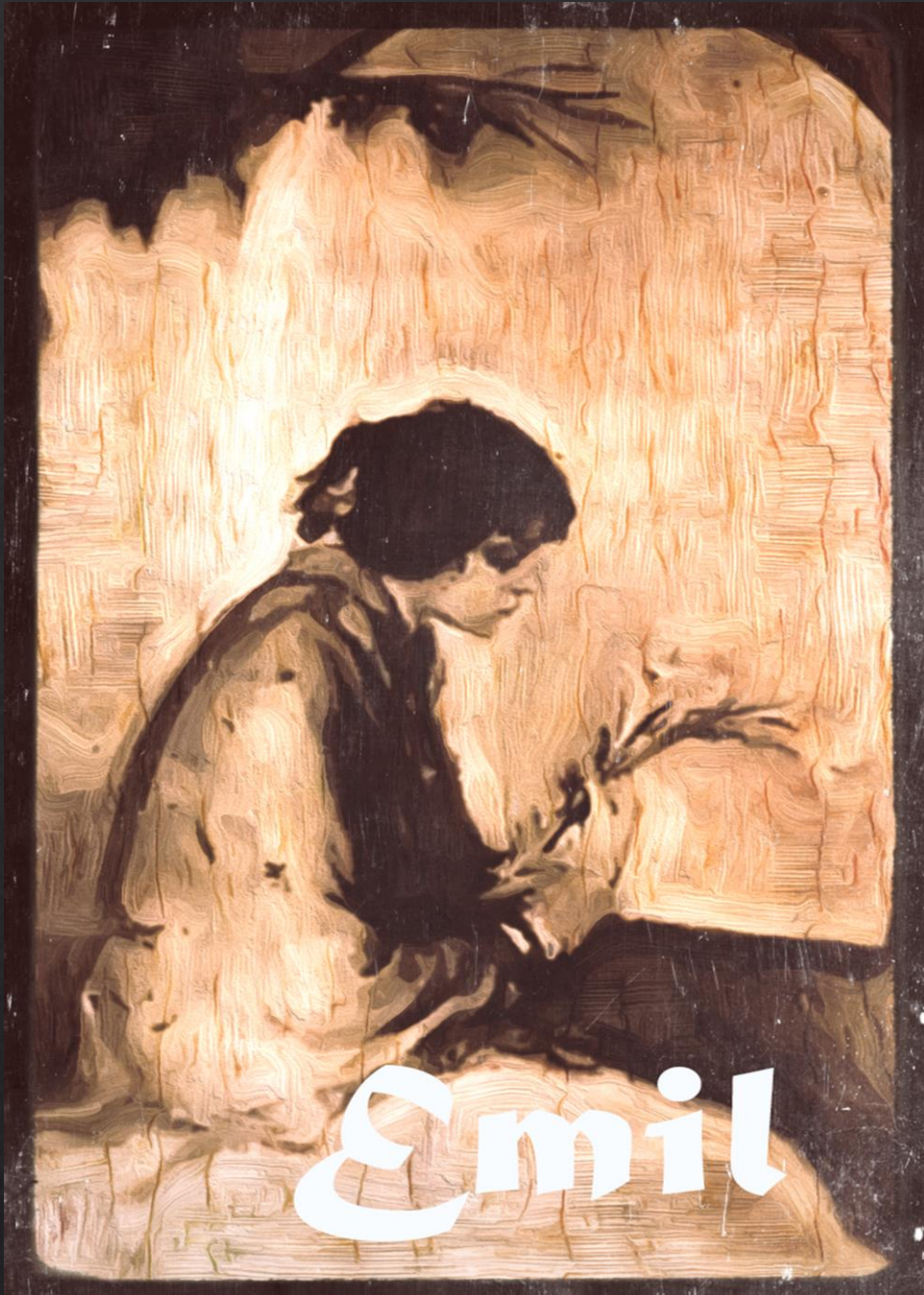




Havana 1928...Gris-Gris (voodoo) came originally from Haiti...but, the Americano (Yakees) loved it...so, Carlos said why not...nightly shows out back, behind the bistro with the celebrated Voodoo Queen...Mamma Saza..."







Carlos had a younger sister who dreamed that someday, she would go to school in America...She was obsessed with everything New York...Carlos sent her to a good Catholic School outside Havana so she wouldn't be hanging around the "Americano Trash" (his true feelings) here at the bistro...



Emil



Faith held the common folks to their traditional believes and helped them not recent the Americano Gangsters doing as they pleased..."Heaven awaits!"



Emil

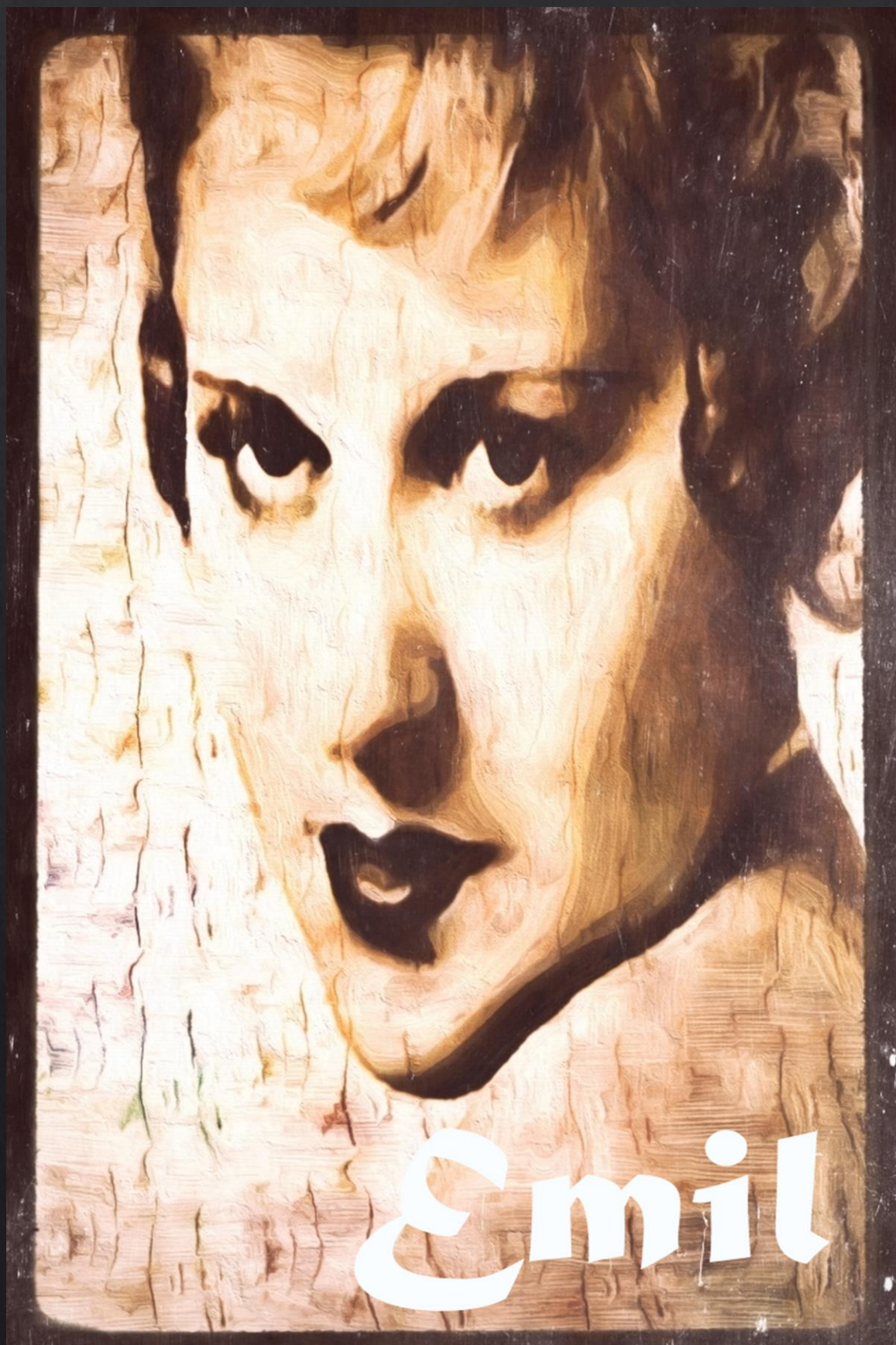


Last call...with Old Man Hunter as my wing man...there she was over at the end of a long bar cluttered with stale shot glasses of Carlos' cheap whisky...





Minnie was never far off page one on my daily thoughts and being away from her stole a little of my soul, daily...Many times, I swore to raise the monies to return to her or pay, maybe, for her passage to Havana but, something always interrupted and stopped me...



Emil

Emil

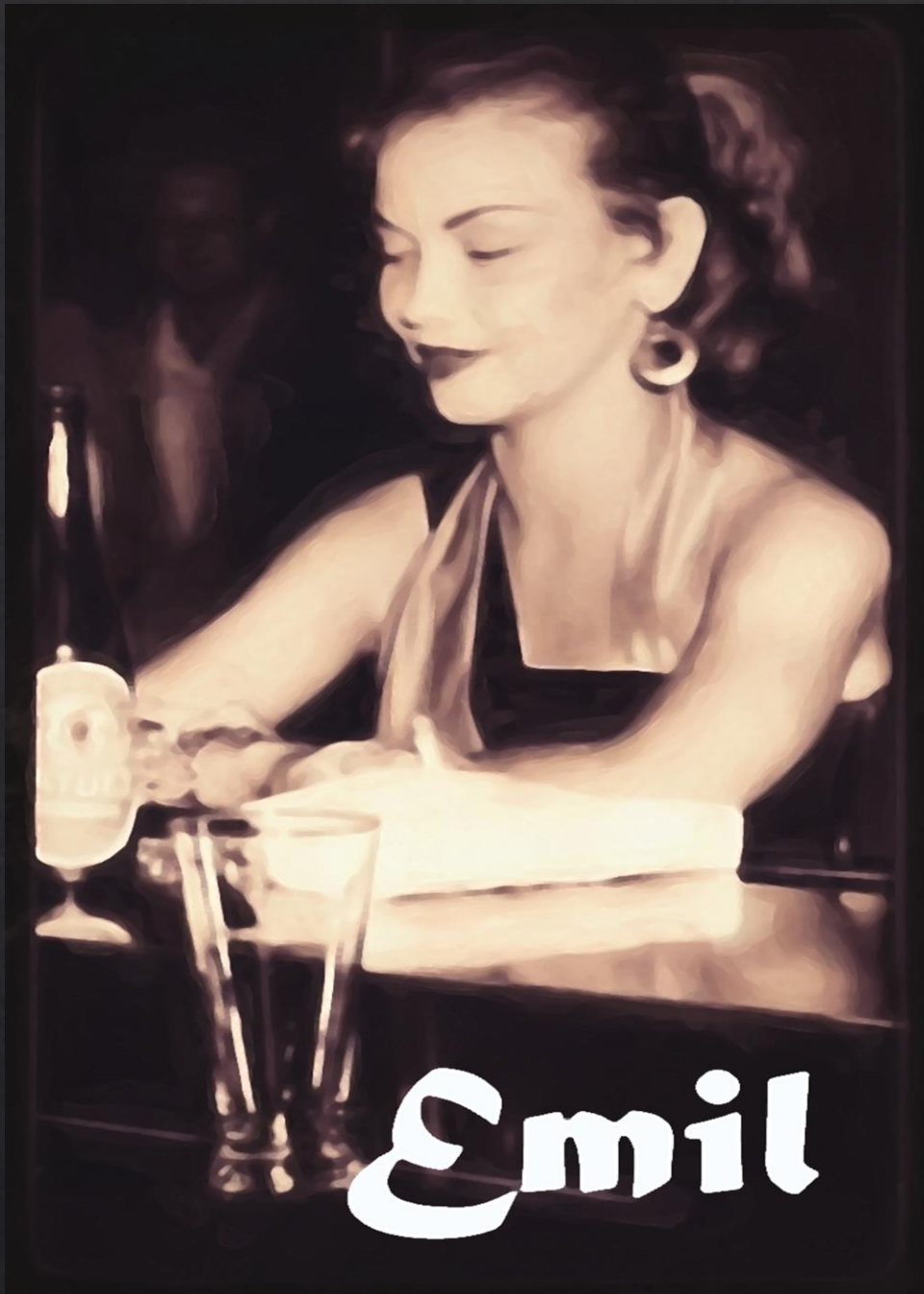


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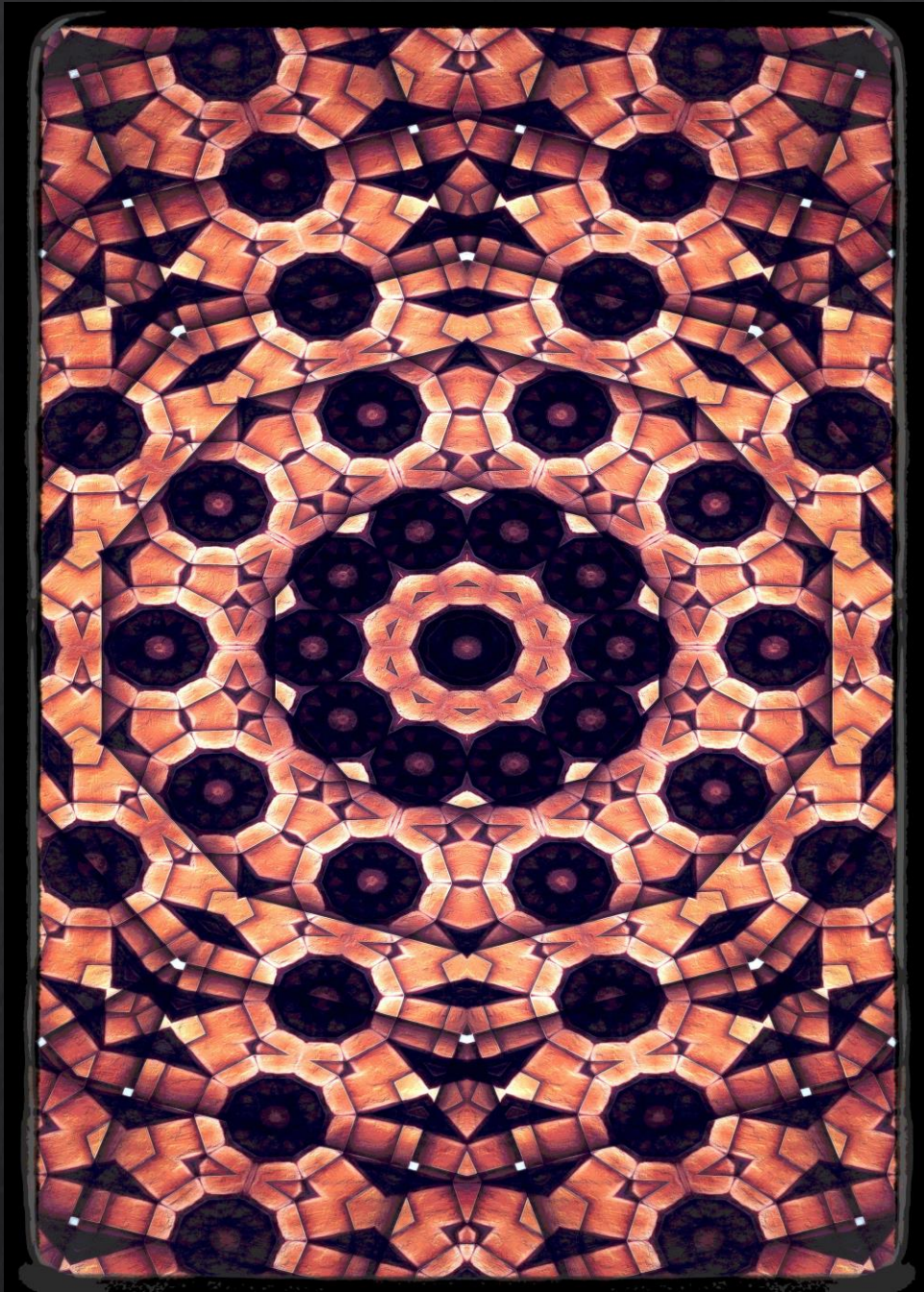


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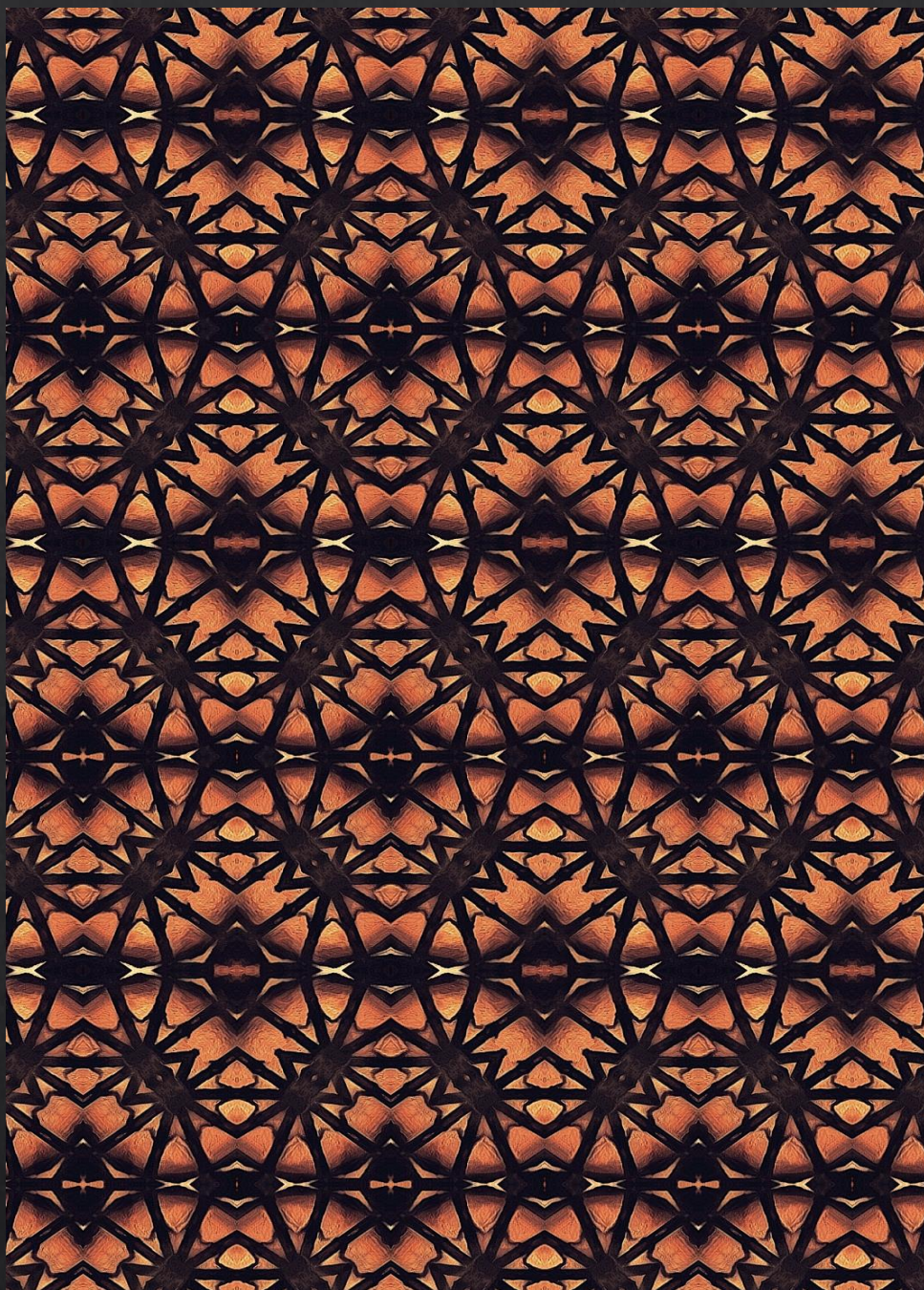
Funny...I recalled it slightly, rather differently than that...and Carlos calls both of us lairs...He said that he and Wanda were just friends...





Doodling in bed on a Sunday Morning, trying to avoid having to get up and attend early mass...The padre is nice, I do like the fellow and he is good to Carlos' gals when many were but, mass...it's in Latin and I barely speak living languages without having to worry to learn dead ones...





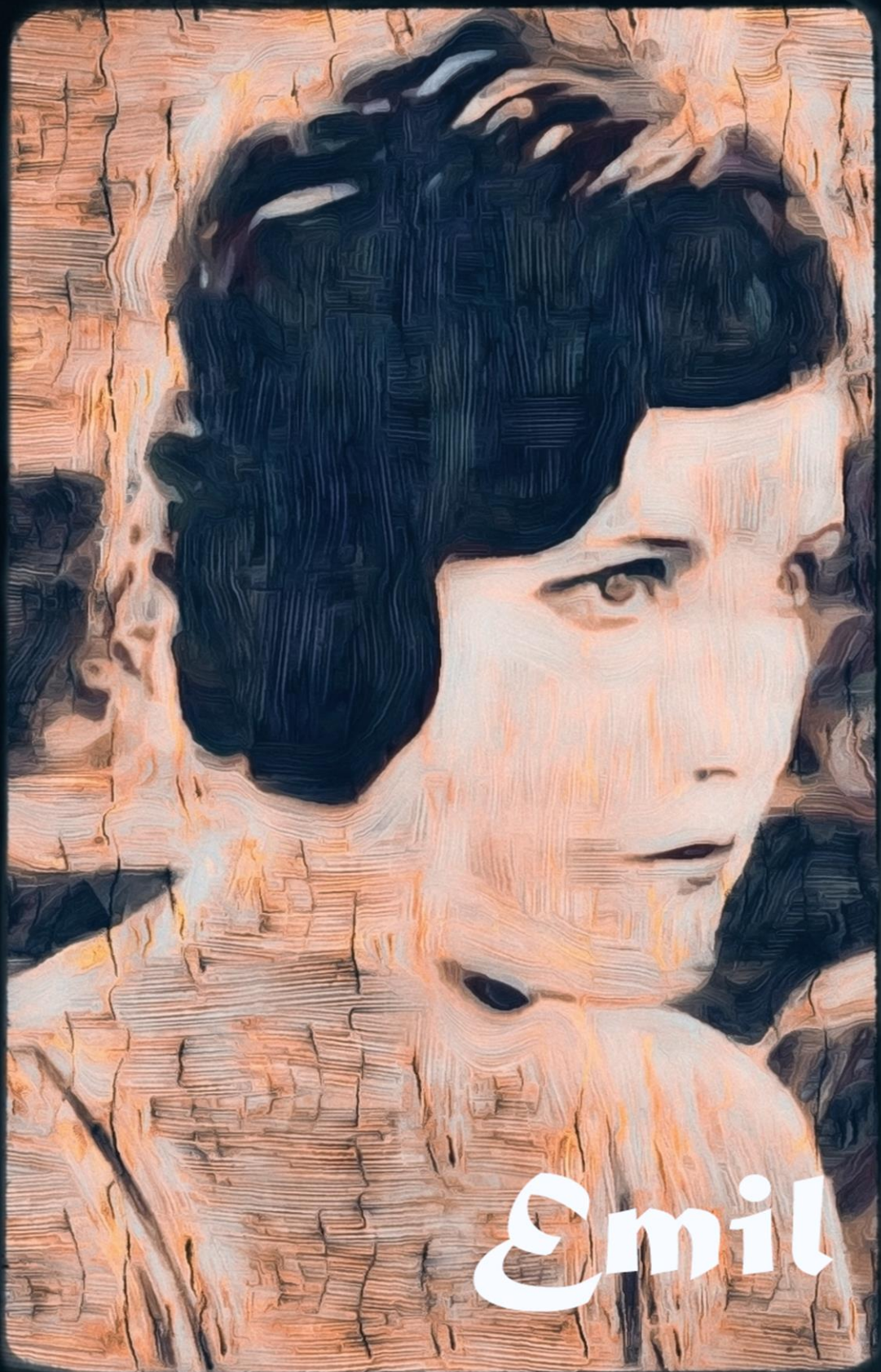
Had this dream of waking up and being covered in giant spiders and it felt like an omen...The Day of the Dead is only a week away...It would seem that I have been hanging out with Mamma Saza way too much...I am starting to believe in this voodoo nonsense?

A painting of a woman with dark, curly hair, looking slightly to the left. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly pink or white, garment with thin straps. The background is dark and textured. The word "Emil" is written in a white, stylized script font across the bottom left of the image.

Emil



That old hat become her signature and she was wearing it proudly the night that Frank's wife showed up and recognized that hat as the one she had given him for Christmas and the fight was on...Frank smartly ducked out early, headed back to the docks and the safety of the Sea Horse...a faded, long boat built for rum running...



Emil

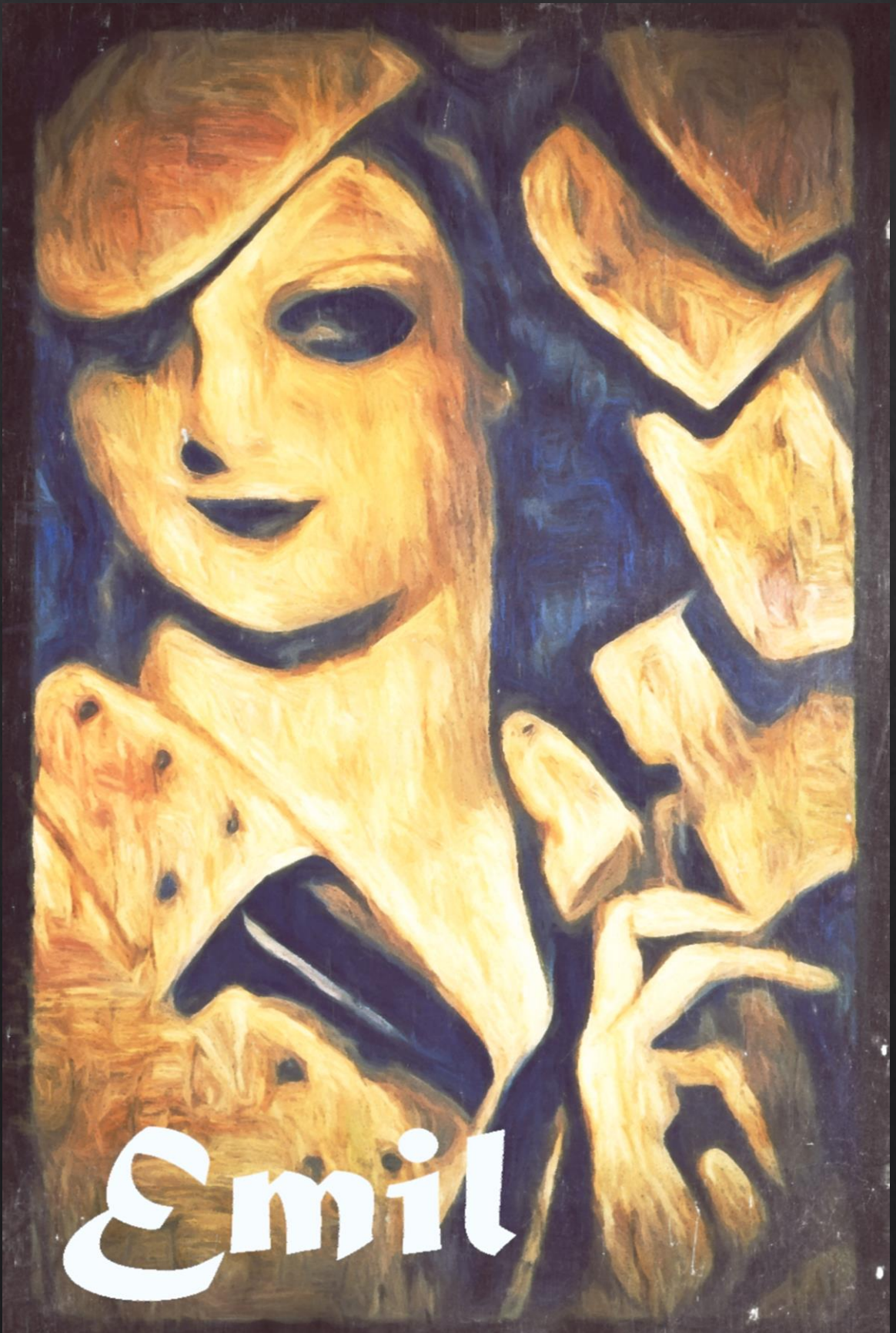




Emil



The old Indian, Clyde, swore that he had been his tribe's medicine man before he was drafted into the war and like most of us, the war messed up our brains and we never went home. He spends his days making these, he calls them "The Eye of God" which are meant to protect us from evil spirits, ghosts and tax men...



Emil



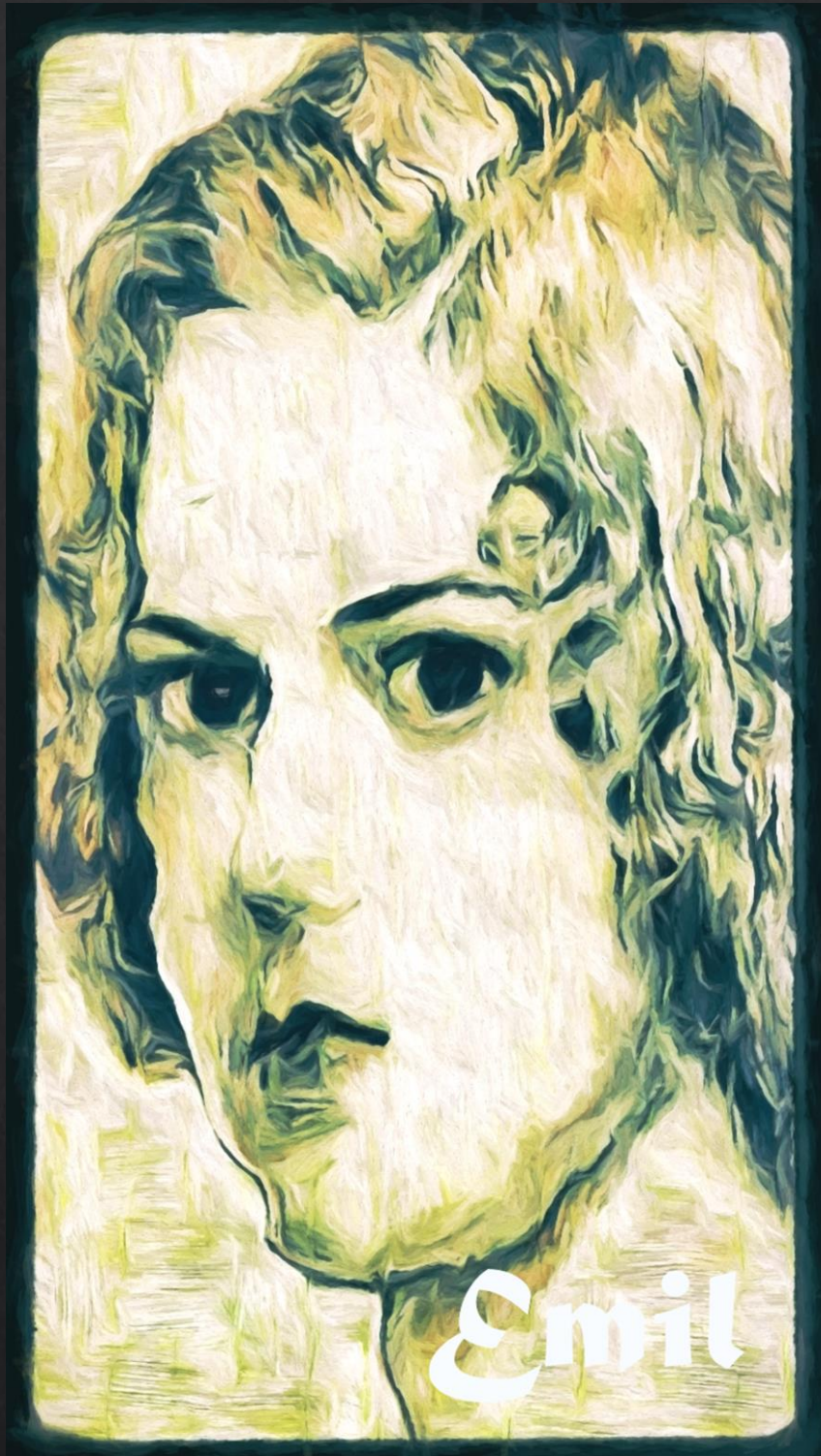
It was late on a rainy Tuesday, a regularly dead night but, then out of the dark and brushing off the excess rain drops, she sat down at the bar...quiet...she didn't say a word other than her drink order to the bartender...I started to approach but, then her look stopped me dead in my tracks...





There always that hint of hopelessness in her expression that struck me as rather sad...like the other working gals here at Carlos, Sandi came from an unhappy childhood and/or failed relationship(s) that washed her up here, at Carlos'...and here she sat...





Never forgot Mimmie...Paris 1917



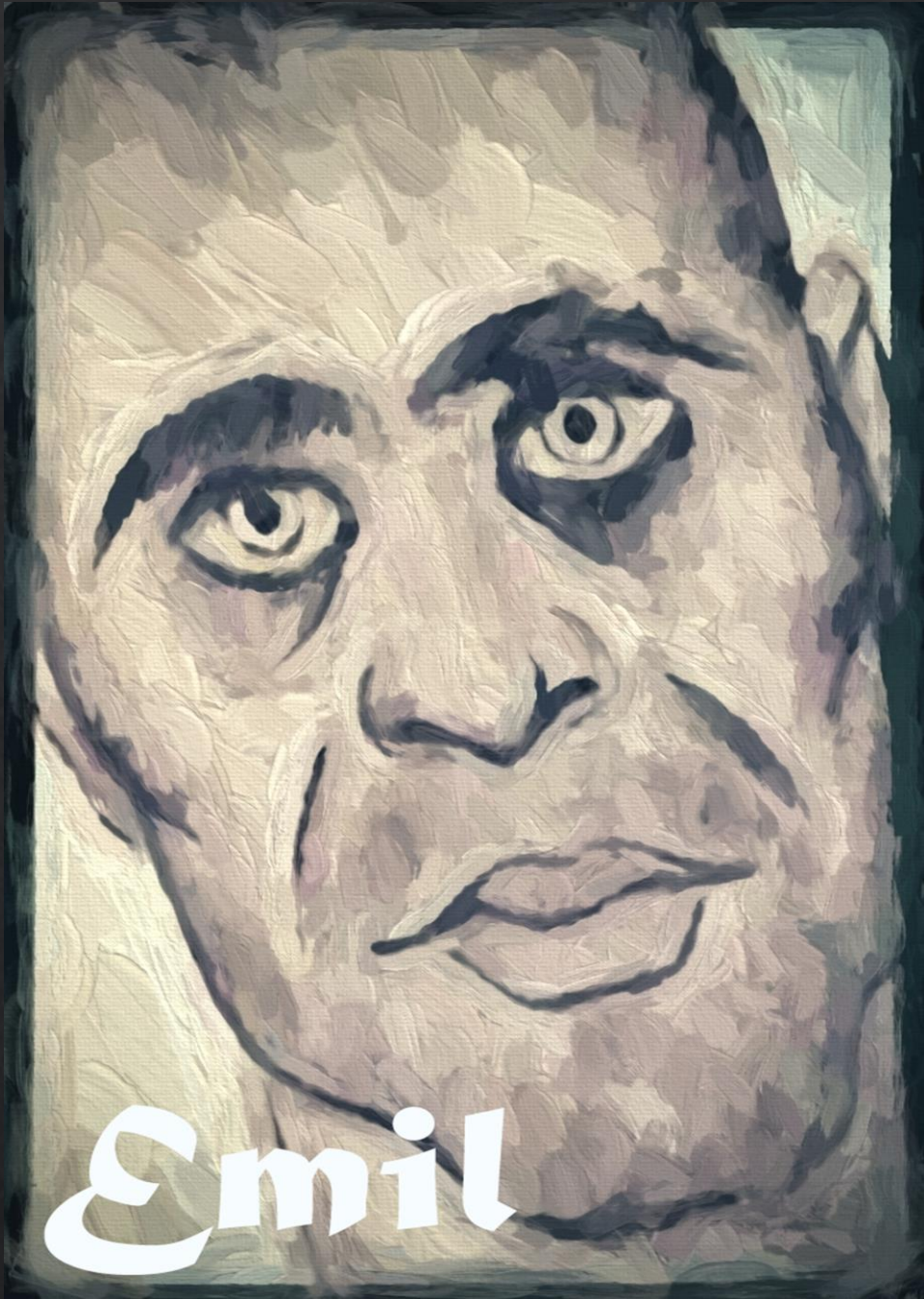




Emil

Finally, the Night of the Dead was upon us and Voodoo Queen...Mamma Saza had us all spooked with her stories from her home in Haiti...zombies, walking dead and local thugs chopping heads off those who refused to pay the bounty...passage...think, I will stay in tonight...just to make sure!





Carlos was always like this, he was a “in-your-face”
kind of guy but, he meant no harm...
In fact, he was a good lot that always had an ear to a
sad story and a soft heart to a pretty gal...
And, as long as we stayed away from his sister, we
would good with him...God help you, if you didn't!

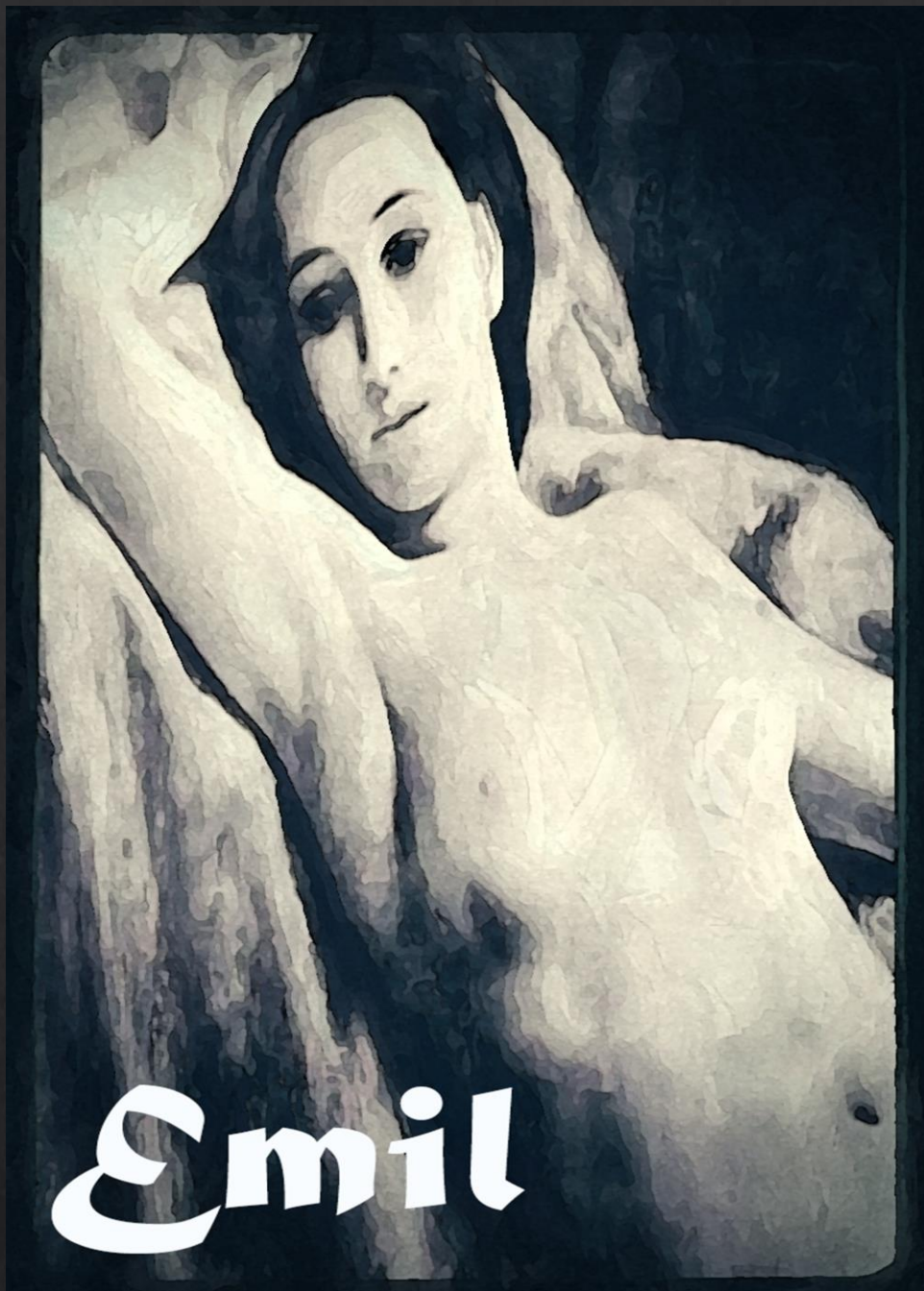


Emil



She was the most handsome woman that I had ever met in Havana and I was smitten from the first “Hello.” She was Big Jim’s lady, he was the leader of the rum running fleet and to go beyond a simple “Hello” would have meant instant suicide...only a sheer fool would dare do more...So, I walked over...sat down and asked her to dance...and to be truthful, that all I remember...





The morning sun painted her figure as she laid there, propped up on the unkempt bed while down in the street, the morning merchants were already hawking their wares to the strolling tourists...she smiled and asked why I was leaving so early...smiling back and with a wink, I said that I didn't really need to...





Emil



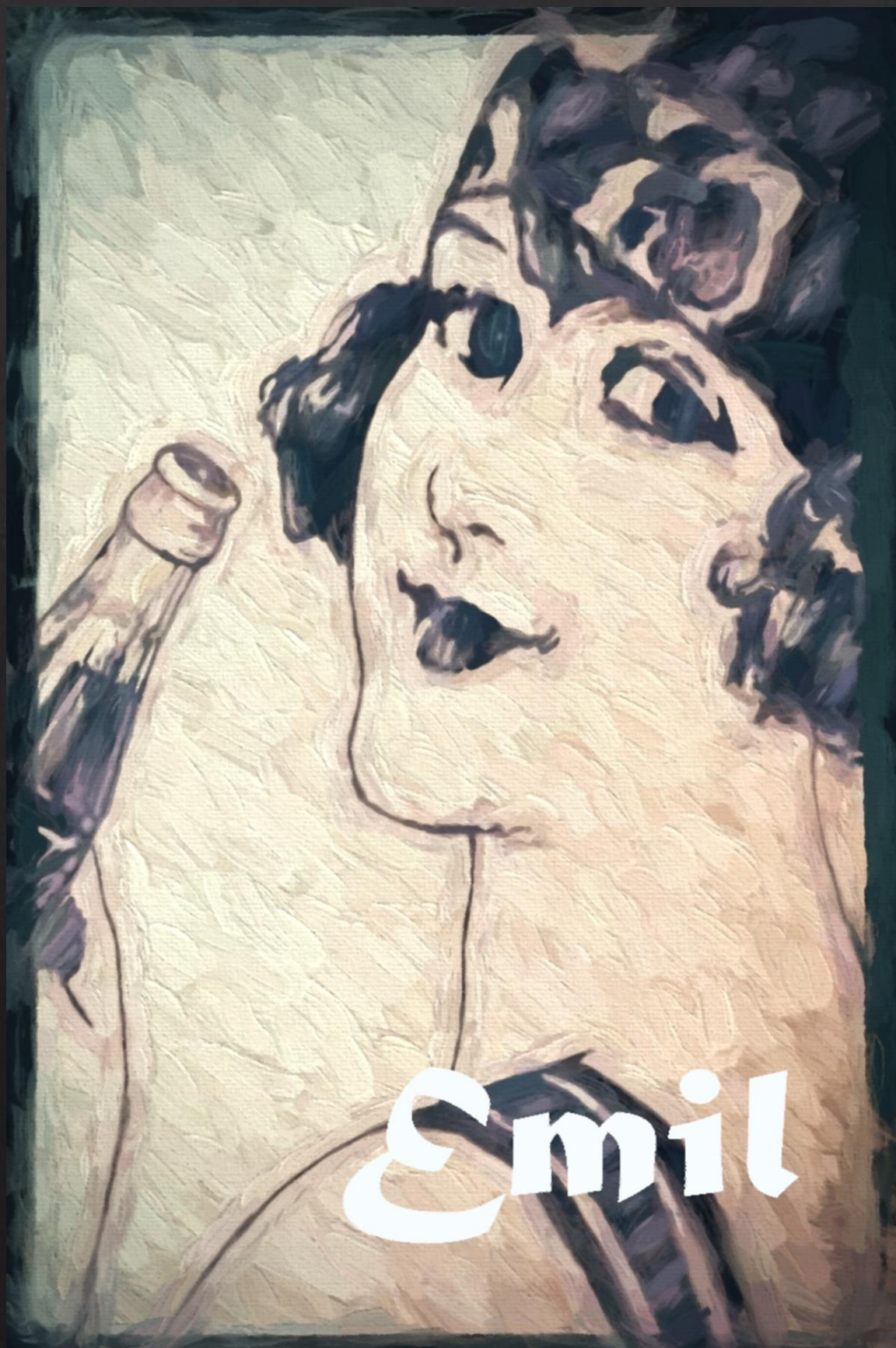
More than a few men lost their hearts to these two French Gals, assuming that they were sisters but, they weren't... They had a rather different relationship which didn't bother me in the slightest, I always said to each their own or was it "love the one you are with?"

A stylized, textured portrait of a woman. She is wearing a wide-brimmed hat with a gold band featuring black scrollwork. Her face is rendered with thick, expressive brushstrokes in shades of pink, red, and white. She has dark, almond-shaped eyes and bright red lips. Her hair is dark and styled in a braid. She is wearing a dark garment with a large, ornate floral corsage in shades of green, red, and white. The background is a mix of dark and light textured areas.

Emil



I always liked the kid, Juan, he was the shoe shine boy at Carlos. He was a good kid, always with a smile and he truly was a master of the shine...he could take the most worn leather and make it look store new... Only later did I learn that his real name was Juanita and that he was a girl...Wo! Sure did fool me!





Most of the regulars were locals, an assortment of Americano rum runners and minor gangsters but, on occasion, we got the likes of this Papa Dandy and his Flapper Gal as they come slumming down here on the docks...they came to play gangster or for thrills...What-the-hell! They paid in hard currency, greenbacks.

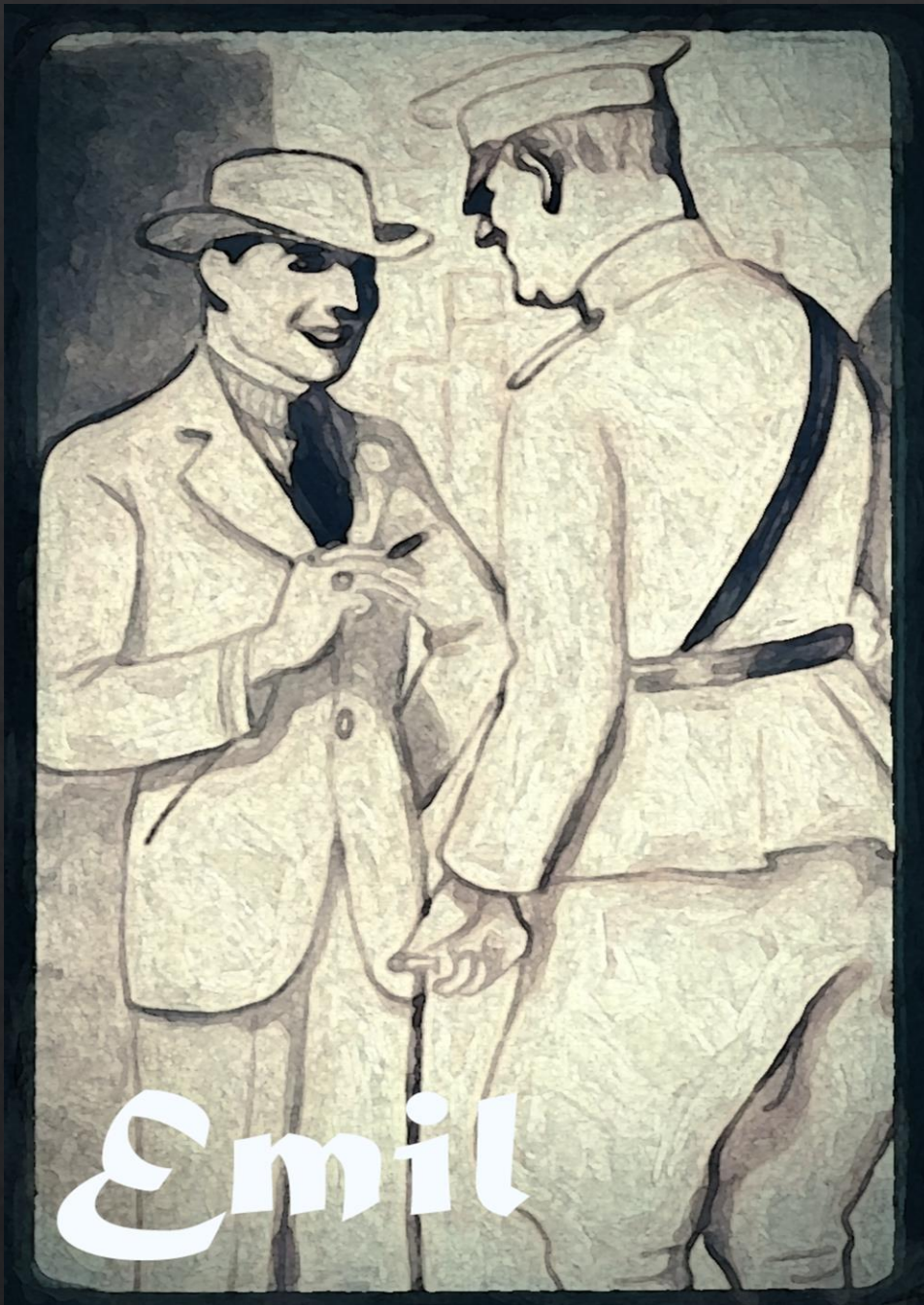




Now, I am a sophisticated man, continental, I dare say...OK! You got a right to your own opinion(s)! But, this new fad of sniffing grains of that white powder up your nose, it seems rather stupid. I hope it doesn't catch on because these clowns don't buy drinks and if they don't buy drinks...we go broke!







Dabber George was a nice guy but, he could never resist a man in uniform but since he was a big spender here at the bar and he never creates a sloppy scene, he is always welcome and we are proud to have him call Carlos' home...he is ever popular with all of Carlos' Gals as he is a great listener and he never makes a pass...





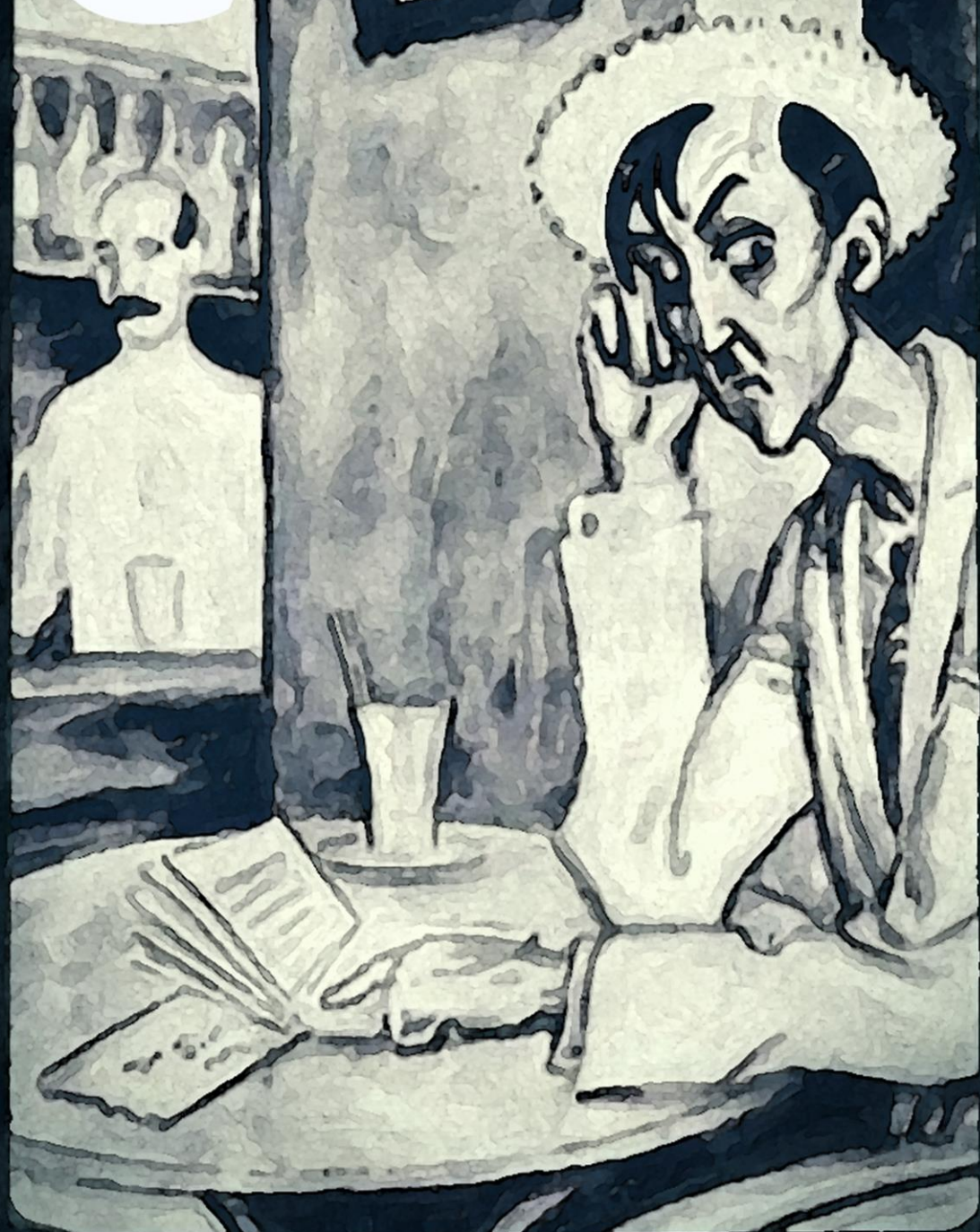
I think Candi never much cared for clothes as I rarely saw her in any...she was a true Utopian Fresh Spirit and was rather well educated to be working here at Carlos' I remember long conversations with her, she was well versed in politics, history and in every day living...if she would learn to like clothes, she could be a college professor...smart as a tack!

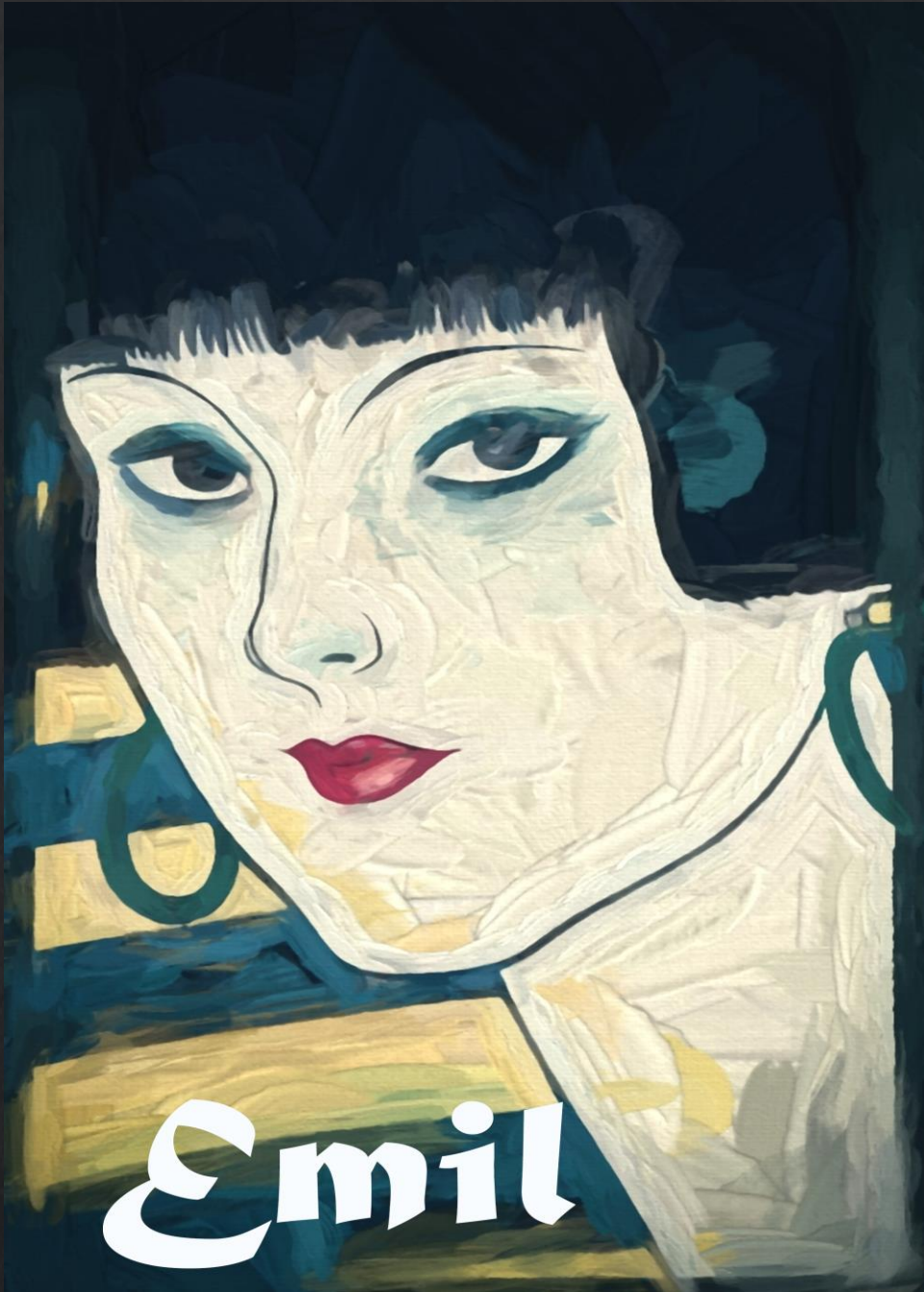




Carlos was very clear about no one messing with Anna as she not necessarily that stable and to those poor few who ignored Carlos' wise wisdom, many are still walking with a blend, a bad limp and one is missing a vital body part....Carlos says that she was abused as a girl and decided to start doing a little of her own...

Emil





She started or ended every conversation with either “Hun” or “Sugar” and somewhere in between she convinced you to do something that you would have normally walked away from, if you were polite...She had a touch and almost every man, even Dabber George was putty in her hands after that first “Hun.”

Emil



Emil



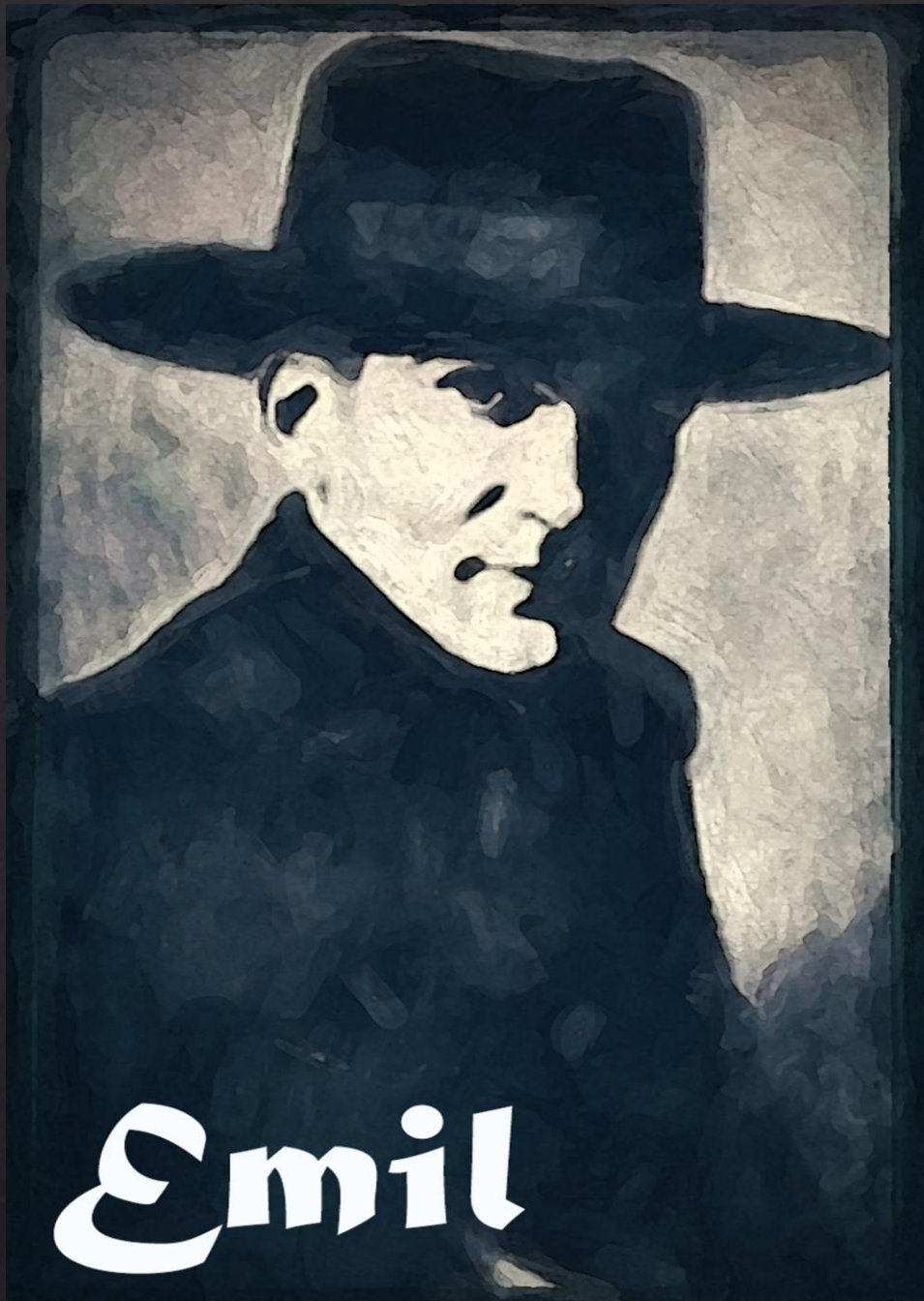




Juan DeSantos was a right proper minister and they said a true “shaker and mover” here in Havana but, more importantly he was Carlos’ childhood friend and a main reason why the authorities never enforced any health or safety regulation violations and over the years, they were staggering...pray for Minister DeSantos’ health.



Emil



Jak Black was a creepy little fellow, some said he was a defrocked priest wanted for murdering his expecting lady gal back in St. Louis or there about...others say, he was a failed Hollywood star, washed up when talkies came in...there were a few of them around...he mostly kept to himself while nursing a single drink all night long...



Emil



Annie originated over in the Western Islands and men were always knee-deep to a grasshopper waiting to bid for her attention...She said that her grandmother always use to say "Some people feel the rain but, most just get wet!" I am afraid to say, I have been wet most of my life unless we talk about Minnie...then, that's different...

Emil





“the conversation started “I know what it means to be dead!” and that alone should have been a strong clue that I was in over my head and common sense said that I should get up and flee...but, she was a beautiful woman wanting her picture done to show her extremely jealous but, cheating boy friend, what he would be missing...





Christina DeSalivado was the youngest daughter of a very powerful army general who asked if I would make a picture for her official coming into Havana Society, a rite-of-passage for young ladies of society...I dare say, she favors her mother more than her father...I will stop there as she has just turned 16 and her dad is a general...







We made fun of the dandies that strolled about but, if you got to know them after a few drinks and swapped stories, they were, a lot of time, fellow Veterans who said “screw humanity...I am in it for myself!” and had made a killing on the New York Stock Exchange then, elected to cash out and follow their “Born Again” Pagan dreams.



Emil



Carlos says the Jorge was maybe the most dangerous man in Havana, a hot-headed revolutionary with a big mouth and not enough sense to know when to shut up...the powerful loved Havana the way it was and cared little for Jorge's moral outrage about how so few controlled everything...you know that line...don't ya?



Emil



The Ritz it ain't but, it didn't cost like it either and where else could one find reasonable accommodations that included quick access to Carlos' while being just far enough way to enjoy the quiet of a community with a large surplus of young, lonely widows (with their fishermen husbands gone dead or missing)...the Padre pointed out this unique feature to me after Mass.



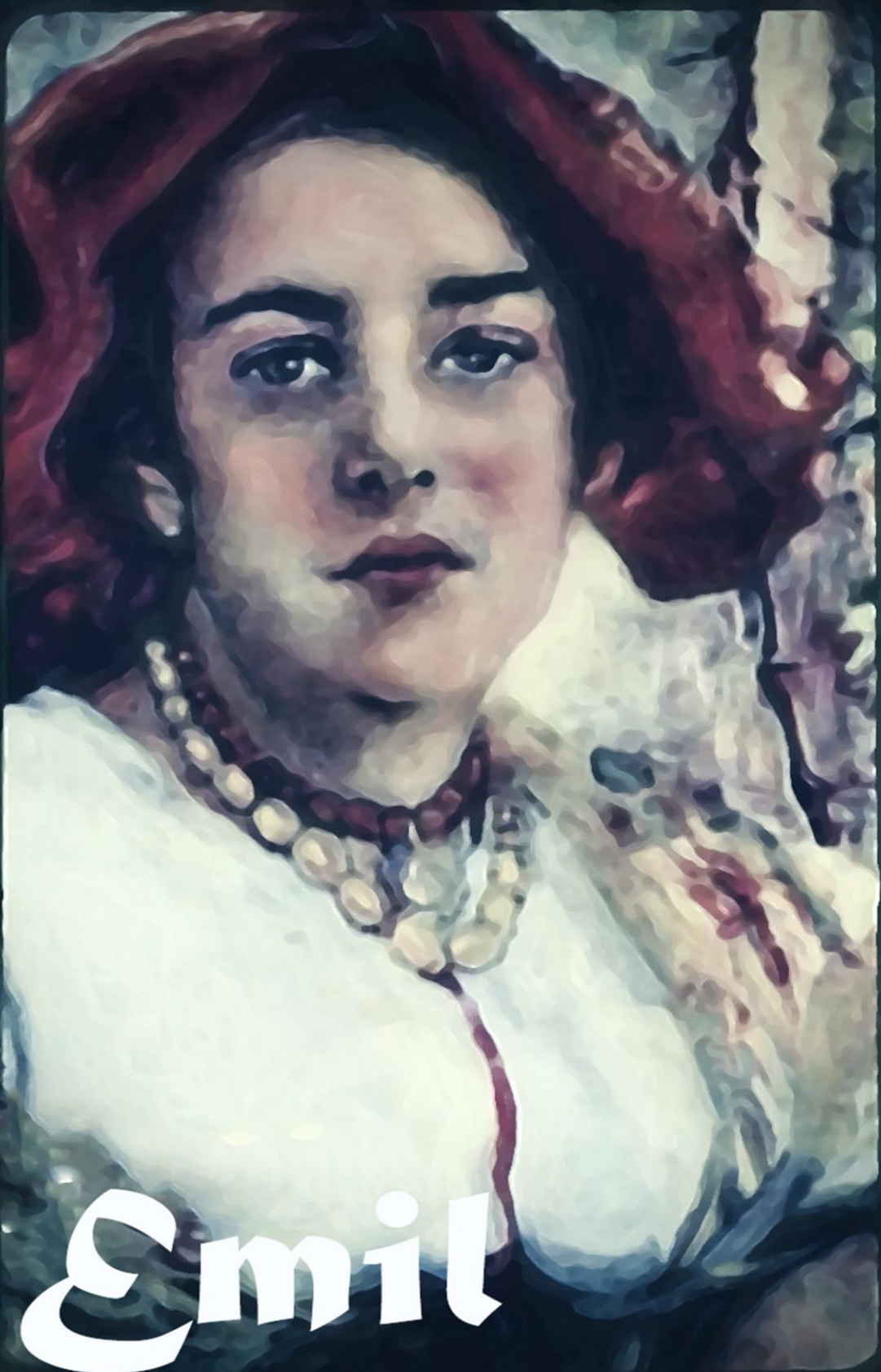


Rachael always said that if she had lived before, she is sure she was a countess or something like that, from that point on, all the gals called her “Your highness” and the Countess Rachael lived each moment of that...I always wondered...if there was any truth to this past life experience but, always wondered why it seems that everyone was someone famous...not one stable boy?



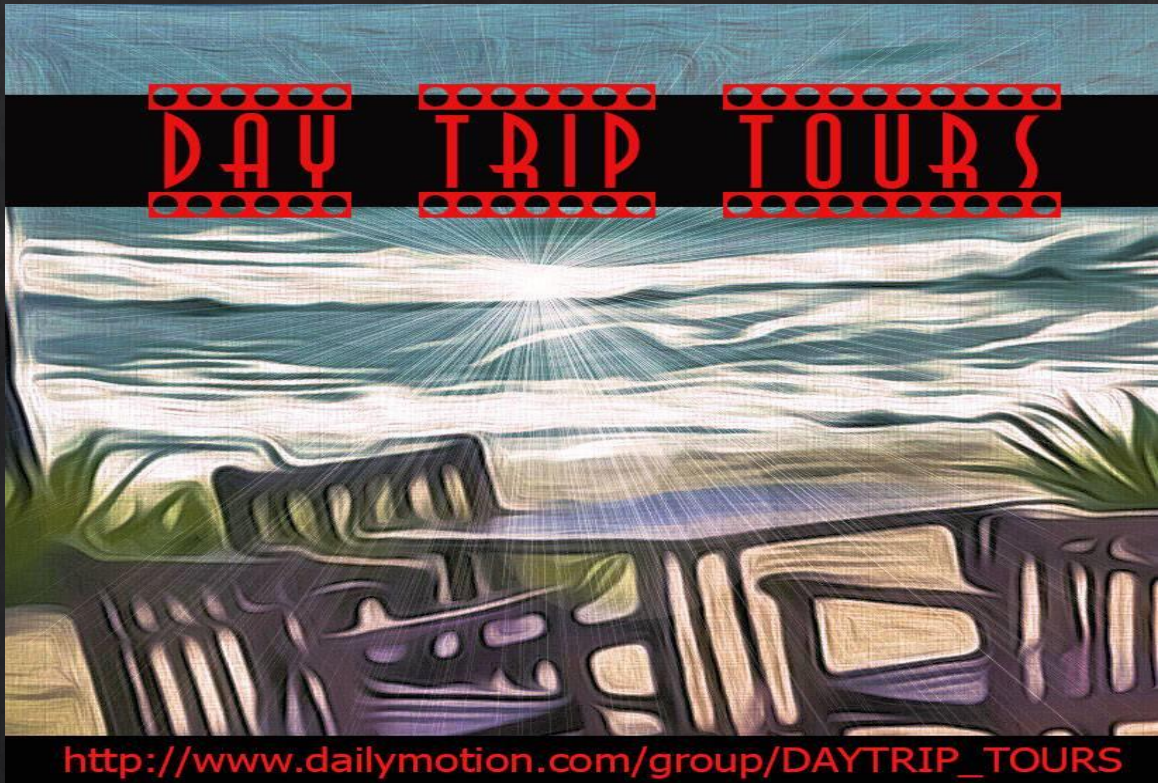


A lot of the gals wanted their picture to be a nude...most never had a reason but, it was like they wanted to have this to remember when they had it and everyone wanted it...something to fondly recall when they became just another "Auntie" sitting on the park bench after early mass...It was like "Wow! Wasn't I something?"



Emil

Emil



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